

THE AGING NETWORK AND MMA IMPLEMENTATION

Josefina G. Carbonell – June 14, 2005

- We at AoA are grateful for this historic opportunity to join CMS in reaching out to people with Medicare through the Aging and SHIP Networks to help them receive the benefits that the Medicare Modernization Act provides.
- I have served for over 30 years in the community with my colleagues in the Aging and SHIP Networks, and I know first hand, about the high quality of service and support you bring to elderly individuals.
- I know it more formally in my role as Assistant Secretary for Aging because we at AoA have been measuring the performance of this Network since I have been here.
- AoA's assessments of your performance present a story of excellence about the way you conduct your business and about the effects that you have on the people we are commissioned to serve and to support.
- It is your outstanding performance and your daily access to elderly individuals that gives us confidence that you will excel in meeting this new challenge.
- People with Medicare, their caregivers, and their families will turn to you because they already know you will help them make the decisions they need to make.
- Today I want to outline how we will work with CMS to provide you the information and tools you need to educate people with Medicare about their new benefits.
- My colleague, Dr. McClellan has clearly defined the significant benefits that the MMA prescription drug program provides.
- Our charge NOW is to tell you how our campaign will support you to help people with Medicare receive their benefits. Through our partnership with CMS, we have begun to provide you with practical tools for this purpose.
- I am sure that many of you are aware of our call to action and our invitation to sign up with AoA to reach out to people with Medicare. You have signed up to: host events, disseminate information, and assist with personalized counseling. Already, over 1,000 organizations have offered to help.
- If you have not yet signed up, I encourage you to do so. I know that you will make every effort to support the needs of people with Medicare in receiving their benefits.

- By registering on the AoA site, you will receive ongoing communications, including: new CMS information, training opportunities, and links to on-line resources and tools.
- Both the Aging and SHIP networks are welcome to participate. Signing up also provides you the opportunity to tell us what you can do as part of this campaign. The web address to sign up is www.aoa.gov/Medicare.
- Another of the tools we are providing is the ability to use an improved version of “Benefits Checkup” to help people apply for benefits. Many community-based organizations already use this tool to help elderly people. The enhanced version will be available on July 1.
- In our campaign we will train up to 2,000 community-based organizations to use the improved tool to apply for the limited income subsidy, to help with choosing prescription drug plans, and to identify other benefits that are available to them.
- Later in this call, our colleagues from CMS will present you with information on other tools that are available now.
- I am very excited to announce a new agreement with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging to target our information and enrollment resources to where they are needed the most.
- We know that community-based organizations are the strongest asset that people with Medicare have to help them make decisions on benefits and care. Our agreement with N4A will help to ensure that we support community-based organizations to achieve that objective.
- The agreement will also support minority organizations and other national organizations, including NASUA and NCOA, and other organizations that share our commitment to help people with Medicare receive the benefits they need.
- In the spirit of this campaign, we will follow the lead of CMS, by working through their regional offices and ours, to ensure the success of our agreement with N4A and all of our efforts.
- But we know that key to success in this historic endeavor is our partnership with you. As Dr. McClellan said earlier, your commitment, your passion and your leadership are inspirational.
- Area agencies on aging, SHIPS, State units on aging, tribal organizations, community service providers and volunteers have proven time and again that they are the most valuable asset that elderly people and their families can rely on for trusted help.
- I am committed to work with all of you to support you in this historic opportunity.

